

The Atlantic End of Uncle Sam's Great Waterway

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.

I WANT to give you a picture of the great work going on at Gatun. Here is the mighty dam which holds back the Chagres, making a reservoir seven times as great as that of the Nile. Above the dam, the locks are the mighty locks which will lift the biggest of the ocean greyhounds from the Atlantic to the lowest level at the end of this chain of the Andes, so that they may shoot across it and go down other water steps into the Pacific. Here is where our canal and the old French canal cross, and where the mightiest of the construction work of the Panama Canal begins. Gatun is in some respects, the heart of this greatest engineering work of all times, the gigantic center from which its nerves radiate.

I came here this morning from my hotel at Ancon on the Pacific. I rose at 6 o'clock and rode with the workmen on the railroad along the canal. I have spent all day in going over the dam and locks with Colonel Sibert, the hydraulic engineer, who has charge of the Atlantic division of the canal, and am now writing these notes on the second floor of the Gatun administration building, in plain view of the canal and the locks, and of the Atlantic Ocean, which is rolling up its surf in Limon Bay.

A Day at Gatun.
All day I have been flying over the dam and the works. I have gone up and down the locks in a car run by a gasoline engine. I have even ridden under those mighty chambers forty feet and more below the level of the locks and under the basins which, when filled with water, will some day lift ships as big as the Olympics on their way from the river from Jersey City to New York, and have seen the holes as big as a hoghead which will admit the waters of the Chagres into the floors of the locks.

I have visited the Atlantic Ocean where the canal ends or begins; have flown across the spillway, and, with my life, it seems to me, ever resting on the balance of a hair and my heart in my throat, have been carried in and out and over this mighty mass of machinery which lifts mountains in its fingers and carries the earth and the waters in the palm of its hand.

Bruta-Backed Scenes.
The scenes are indescribable. Even now my head buzzes as I look at the flying steel cables which are carrying steel hogheads loaded with stone through the air as though they were balloons filled with the lightest of gas, at the rivers of cars piled high with the blue rock from Culebra cut, and at the vast moving network of steel wires, railroad trains and human beings which covers the Gatun locks and the dam.

The impressions which come through the air here are almost as terrifying as those through the eye. The drums of my head are vibrating at something like a thousand movements a second. A boiler factory would be a rest cure in comparison, and the shrieking of the steam, and the exploding of the dynamite, the hammering of steel upon steel and the thousand noises of mighty machines are combined into a rasping din that makes one's nerves the only perceptible part of his being. It is under such conditions that I am giving you my impressions and recording some of the notes which were made here to-day at Gatun.

A Flying-Machine View.
Let me first make a rough drawing of the scene as it looks from the roof of this office building on the top of the high hill just over the dam. We might be in a flying machine, for the waters of the ocean and those of Gatun Lake and the canal, which lead to them, are spread out below us as though on a map. Looking to the north, you can follow the line of the canal from Limon Bay right up to the locks. A score of great dredges are now working in it, and there is only a small amount of excavation, comparatively speaking, yet.

At the end of this channel is the masonry of the locks, now almost completed, and beyond them the dam where the waters of the Chagres are rising. There is now only about twenty feet of water in the lake, but it is a beautiful sheet, with many islands spotting the surface. Later on it will be seventy feet higher, and will cover such a vast extent that sitting on the steamers some parts of it extend beyond the range of the eye.

The Locks at Gatun.
Now take a rapid view of the locks. They lie below us in three pairs of gigantic stone chambers, one above the other, covering a distance of more than half a mile, and containing material enough to build a little city of skyscrapers. The material is concrete and it looks like stone. Connected with that in the dam its amount is altogether more than two million cubic yards, or more than enough to make a wall six feet wide and six feet high of solid concrete from New York to Washington. The dam alone contains more than 21,000,000 cubic yards of material, and enough earth has been put there to build a roadway a foot thick and nine feet wide, if earth and rock could be laid on the water, from

the locks at Gatun to the locks at Panama. The dam is the heart of the canal, and the locks are the hands which will lift the ships from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Will It Hold the Water?
As we looked I talked with Colonel Sibert about the dam, and he gave me a technical description from which I am convinced it will hold back the waters of the Chagres for all time to come. He says that the earth in the dam is the same as that which forms the bottom of the lake. The engineers

made drillings, but they found that there was 250 feet of such material above the bed rock, and that a concrete dam was impossible. They then tested the earth to see whether it would hold water, and it did. They analyzed it and found that much of it contained blue clay, and they have discovered that some of it was formed by the silt from the Chagres, and other parts by the sea, which once came here in the form of a great bay. As an evidence of this I saw sea shells dug up by my trip this morning.

The blue clay which forms a part of this earth is absolutely waterproof. In one place the engineers found the trunk of a tree imbedded in it. The log was fifty-six feet below sea level, but it was not in the least affected or decomposed. It had evidently lain there for thousands, and possibly millions, of years, and had the water gotten to it it would have rotted away.

When the dam is completed the central portion of it, or core, will be made of earth containing material like this, and the parts in front and behind this will be of the excavated spoil, filled with the other material made up of the silt from the Chagres.

This dam material has, as I have said, been tested, and there is no doubt but that it will hold the water, although a great construction could not

be erected upon it. It is only owing to the rocky hill in the center of the dam that the spillway is founded on rock, and it looks as though the Lord, when He created this part of the earth, dropped that rocky hill here in order that man might be able to create a water highway from ocean to ocean.

The Problem One of Construction.
As we went over this vast work, squinting our eyes to keep out the flying sand from the myriads of spoils trains which run by us, I asked Colonel Sibert if the dam was not the most wonderful ever created. He replied that it was the largest dam ever planned, but that the problem of making it was one of construction rather than of engineering. It was a question of accomplishing a vast amount of work within a short time rather than one of difficult engineering. The principal problem dealt with the handling of the material, but in other ways the construction was no more difficult than that of any complicated piece of big engineering, and not as difficult as some.

I here asked Colonel Sibert when the dam would be finished, and as to just when the canal would be really opened. He replied:

"As to the canal, the President has told the people that it will be opened on July 31, 1914. That may be so, I certainly know that it will be so as to this part of the work, locks, dam and all."

And just here I want to say a word about Colonel Sibert. He is one of the best equipped civil and mechanical engineers of his time, and he has made a reputation as an hydraulic engineer for his work here at Gatun. He has had charge of what is known as the Atlantic division, including the impounding of the waters of the Chagres and the construction of the canal from here to the sea. Colonel Sibert is a graduate of West Point, and he began his engineering career at the time he left the academy. He made some reputation in connection with the great locks at the sea, which he aided in building, and also in the rebuilding of the railroad in Central Luzon at the close of our war with the Spaniards. After that he had charge of the construction of the dam on the Ohio at Pittsburgh, and of the other river improvements there. It is now over five years since he came to Panama. He is a man who should know whereof he speaks, and his remark that this part of the canal will be completed on time indicates that it is one of the sure things of the future.

Through the Locks on a Roller Coaster.
You all know the devilish roller coaster. I mean the billowy little railway of the summer resort whose tracks run uphill and down and wind about like a snake, leading the heart of the passenger to the roof of his mouth. This in a feeble way will give you an idea of a ride in a motor car through the locks. The steps taken by the steamer in getting over the mountain from ocean to ocean were ascended and descended on a railroad track. We would climb up and dive down forty feet at a time, and above us would be machinery carrying iron and stone. On both sides of the locks rose great walls of masonry which made one

think of the side of the Washington Monument as he looked across him. Now the car would take a turn and we would shot down through the mighty tubes which will let in the water, and now we were at times under the very bed of the locks.

We went up to the gates, which are now swarming with workmen, and as I looked at the men the engineers told me that each leaf weighed 600 tons, or, otherwise, they are so delicately poised that they move as easily as a girl opens a fan after a hot dance on a Saturday night at the Tivoli Hotel. Each of these gates weighs 1,200 tons. I laugh as I think how one of them would have rattled old Samson, who bore away the brass gates into pieces and it will take 2,000 horses to pull them.

From the Locks to the Atlantic.
Leaving the locks we transferred our motor car to the construction tracks leading down to the Atlantic, and ran along the banks of the canal where a while at the point where the old French canal crosses it, where the excavation is almost completed, although a score of mighty dredges can be seen working clear out into Limon Bay. The canal here is about five feet deep enough for the most of the way, but dredging has to be done for five miles out into the Atlantic, and there is a little batch of something like 12,000,000 cubic yards of dirt between here and the locks. This is a little above the equator, but that is only a small thing here, where figures summing into tens of millions are dealt with.

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[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]
Hot Springs, Va., March 26.—The spring scene here, which of late years has been the center of attraction for the height, and for the next six weeks at least, will be a scene of people through the college and prep school crowd, who will come down for the Easter vacation, riding and driving, tennis, golf, and other sports, and the gymnasium and swimming pool when it is called bridge eternally for the elder set, and nightly dances and hilarious supper parties afterward in the grill for the younger set—that tells the whole story in brief, though there are, of course, lots of interesting details.

John Philip Sousa, who has been at the Homestead with his family for more than a week, spends several days at work upon a new orchestral composition, to be called "Travel Tales," which is to express some of the impressions he received during his recent trip around the world with his band. The composition will begin with a musical interpretation of South Africa, which had a great charm for him. Mr. Sousa says, than any other country. He finds time, however, for long horseback rides

each day, in which he is joined by Mrs. Sousa, and Miss Friedhelm, of Berlin, who is here with them. Mrs. Sousa is fond of all outdoor sports, and says that a horse, a gun, a dog and a girl will represent his idea of Paradise.

There is a lively hour in the swimming pool between 2 and 3 o'clock every afternoon. Numbers of the younger set are expert swimmers, and there is usually an exhibition of fancy diving and stunts on the diving board. William Holtenback, of Philadelphia, former football coach at the University of Pennsylvania, is as much at home in the water as on the bridge, and other skilful at aquatics are Chateau Walsh, of St. Louis; Mrs. Barclay Warburton, and Miss M. L. Wanamaker, of Philadelphia.

The octagonal ball-room of the Homestead has been the rendezvous to-day of all the visitors in the hotel, and most of the members of the cottage colony. It was filled with decorated booths and turned into a bazaar, where since early morning nearly every one has been on the move. There have been on sale for the benefit of St. Luke's new rectory, Mrs. Edgar A. Polo, Mrs. Frank G. Hopkins and Mrs. Davidson have been among those who have been most interested in the art-patronage. Tea was served there this afternoon.

Mr. Morton Garden is one of the gayest and most entertaining of the guests here, and entertains frequently. He gave a dinner in the Japanese room this week for Mr. and Mrs. William F. Perry Chubb also gave a dinner in the Japanese room for Mr. and Mrs. Tracy Dows, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Steele and Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Stevens, of New York.

Mr. and Mrs. T. W. Burnham gave one of the largest teas of the week, having as their guests Mrs. J. P. Burton, of Detroit; Mr. and Mrs. M. O. Bralley, of Chicago; Mrs. Studley, of Providence; Mr. and Mrs. Guy Hinsdale, of Danville, and Miss Jean Hinsdale.

Mr. and Mrs. John H. Burton, of Woodmere, N. J., have been very busy with their arrival a week ago visiting nearly all the points of interest in the neighborhood that can be reached with a horse and carriage. Taking with them Mrs. Robert Burton, Miss Florence Burton and Miss Jessie Hazard, they visited Oak Grove, on the way to Fallington Springs, one of the most beautiful of the mountain cascades in the State. The Oaks, a Virginia plantation, where the guests are to stay, was reached through Dum's Gap, made the trip through the Cascades and took numerous other jaunts.

DANVILLE
Danville, March 30.—The residence of Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Gill, Aiken Place, on West Main Street, was a scene of gaiety on Friday evening, the occasion being an emerald soiree, at which Miss Thelma Gill and her cousin, Miss Elizabeth Pace, entertained their friends. The spacious residence was thronged with guests, who overhauled the reception room and the corridors, and occupied every available cozy corner. About one hundred and fifty persons greeted the charming young hostess, who had been very busy with her duties in evidence in the decorations, shades of green predominating in the reception rooms, hall and corridors. Palms, pines and other perennials were effectively blended in decorative designs. The lights were veiled with emerald shades, and the same color effect was noticeable in the lace, the confections and the punch, in which a green cherry tinged each cup, and the green punch bowl, which was decorated with clusters of grapes. A novel and enjoyable feature of the occasion was the appearance of the recitation, impromptu by William Guernsey in a costume of two shades of green, and with cap and bells and wand.

Mrs. E. G. Mosely is the guest of Mrs. Plumber Wiseman in Atlanta, Ga. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Old, of Elizabeth City, N. C., were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. John H. Schoolfield, Jr., last week.

Miss Mary Wilson is visiting friends in Lynchburg.

Miss Virginia Dance, who has been spending some time in Norfolk and Virginia Beach, has returned home again.

The many friends of Mrs. Randolph Meade will be glad to learn that she has sufficiently recovered to be removed from the hospital to her home. Mrs. G. Frank Thomassen is in

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Mrs. Crosby Thompson entertained at an informal dance Tuesday evening in honor of her guest, Miss Markey, of Cleveland, Ohio.

Mr. Neustadt, of New York, has purchased the Brick House farm, near West Point, where he expects to move his family shortly.

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